

411 size, from those used in the plains. The plains blacksmith does
326 recognize the Hill Maria's individual taste in such matters, but that
taste is always being modified by the sight, occasional use and
occasional purchase of plains types, particularly if, when a new
weapon is wanted in a hurry, only the latter are immediately
available.

411 The blade of the average Maria knife measures 13 to 15 cm.
from the point to the beginning of the tang. It is about 2.5 cm.
broad where the tang begins, and from there the cutting edge curves
inwards for a quarter or a fifth of its length, thence tapering with
a slight convex curve to the point, which is 2 or 3 cm. to the side
of the axis of the handle. The reverse edge is about 3 mm. thick
in the tang, the thickness gradually diminishing towards the point.
The tang is a continuation of the thick side of the blade, about
8 mm. wide where it leaves the blade and tapering for about 3.5 or
4 cm. to a pointed end. Except where it is continued in this tang,
the blade has a horizontal bottom. The tang is heated and so
burned into the wooden handle; the blacksmith, with this as all
iron tools and weapons, supplies only the iron, and the buyer makes
his own handle. The edge is produced in the first place by hammer-
ing on each side, followed by rubbing down a whet-stone. Being
made of soft iron smelted from local ore, these knives can be given
an extremely sharp point and fine edge. They are not usually
[412] taken back to the smith to be sharpened, but are whetted on a
stone; there is often a flat, black, polished, communal whet-stone
outside the men's dormitory (*gotal*) in a hill village.

411 Besides fitting the tang into a short, cylindrical, wooden handle,
322 about 6.5 to 7.5 cm. long, and in diameter 2 cm. at the base and
somewhat thinner where the tang enters it, the Hill Maria makes
a wooden sheath of two flat pieces of wood trimmed roughly to the
shape of the blade, each of which has on one side a low flange
slightly more than half as thick as the thick edge of the blade.
The two flat pieces are laid on each other, the flanged edges together,
and are joined by whipping of twine, *kosa* silk or millimetre-wide
thin thongs of hide at the broad top, over a groove round the centre
of the sheath, and near its point. The sheath is often carved,
[531] favourite designs being rough lozenges in relief on a bar, or a bar
indented, or bands of three parallel lines.

411 This knife the Maria uses for slicing bamboo and all ordinary
cutting purposes; holding the handle loosely in his hand he uses
its full weight for chopping with the concave portion of the blade
pieces of wood up to 3 cm. in diameter, getting a surprisingly
straight cross-section; he usually chops all round the circumference
to a depth of a third of the diameter, then breaks off the portion to

487 the bed of the stream ; these are held in position between upright
 491 poles set V-wise in the boulders, to which are fastened horizontal
 [322] bamboo poles as railings. As they have no saws, the ' plank ' is
 a tree trunk with one side trimmed flat with the axe. Even more
 elaborate bridges are sometimes made at high levels over streams
 liable to flood, from tree-fork to tree-fork on opposite banks.

361 Though, as has been said above, agricultural conditions
 nowadays determine village sites, hill-tops or rocky slopes remain
 favourite sites, and become commoner as you penetrate farther into
 the Abujhmar hills. The traditional arrangement is a street some
 [363] twenty-five yards wide between parallel lines of long-houses ; at
 one end of the street is the *gotul-lon* or village dormitory, generally
 within a rounded bamboo fence, and sometimes in front of this
 dormitory will be seen the *udam-garia* or seat of honour of the
kasyeq-gaita and possibly also of the secular headman (*gaita* or *peda*),
 as well as the stones on which the other village elders sit around
 with them in conclave ; but the *udam-garia* custom is not found in
 all parts of the hills.

[778] Sometimes the shrine of the *Nar-Talughi* or
 Village Mother is actually inside the dormitory fencing, and she is
 often housed there for a while when a village is being shifted.
 There are, as a rule, no *bari* (vegetable gardens) attached to each
 house as amongst most Gonds, including the Bison-horn Marias
 and the Murias of Bastar ; but sometimes the *kasyeq-gaita* has
 a small tobacco *bari* attached to the dormitory in the centre of the
 main street. The *Gazetteer* (p. 50) speaks of the ' common granary '
 as standing in the broad street ; but with one partial exception,
 Nugur village in Kutru Mar in the Indrawati valley, I have never
 seen this. The villagers generally construct a row of granaries
 343 (*manda* or *wijja-dodi*) on piles at the side or rear of the main village
 251 street, sometimes nearer the *penda* fields than the village ; this row
 can hardly be called a ' common granary ', as each villager has his
 own granary in the row for his own private food and seed store,
 the granaries being built together only for convenience, as they
 can then be watched at night by one watchman for the whole
 village, sleeping in a special hut at the side of the granaries or under
 a granary. At Nugur there were big matting bins in the main
 street in which all the rice seed of the village was stored ; but here
 [426] the village had come under the economic thralldom of some Teli
 tradesmen, who for years had advanced rice to the cultivators.
 The bins were left in the collective charge of the headman and elders,
 and any villager could help himself to seed on the understanding
 that at harvest he would replace it with 50 per cent. interest,
 the Teli owners being also free to remove the surplus from time
 to time.

Plate LXXXI

Chelik at Bandopal
making a kutul
head-rest



Chelik at Phunder
making a comb



[p. 406 (A)]

764 has been specially hollowed out for this purpose. Usually
273 there is no stock of rice-beer at hand and it cannot be made
so quickly. The Maria then mix a little mandia flour with
water and give this instead.

If for any reason in the course of the ceremony some rite
or custom is omitted the spirit of the dead man may
attack one or other of the mourners in order to show his
displeasure. For example, at Gadapal, Burka Peda told
me that they once forgot to give landa to the old menhirs
and the insulted Dead attacked his father's sister and she
fell down in a fit. They quickly gave both landa and mahua
liquor to all the menhirs and she recovered. Again in
Mahara-Karka one Kuhrami Eriya was hurled into the
fire by the angry ghost and his leg was burnt. If this
happens it is a good plan for the victim to run and catch
[789] hold of the bamboo poles with which the stone was carried.
The Gaita pours water upon him and the angry ghost leaves
him alone.

IX

- 322 When a very well-known or wealthy man dies his family
766 sometimes erects a carved wooden pillar to his memory.
554 There are very few of these pillars, though the custom of
making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great
and only the most important people are considered worthy
of them.

322 These pillars are called by Grigson *urasgatta*, a word that
766 is obviously formed on the same plan as *uraskal*, from
urasma meaning 'to bury' and *gatta*—'a pillar'. I have not
myself found any Maria using the word or even recognizing
it when it has been put to them. It may be that its use
has died out. The Maria to whom I have spoken call these
pillars either *munde* (Gondi) or *kambha* (Halbi or Hindi).

The pillars are usually erected near a highway—not
necessarily a motorable one. It should simply be near any
road or path that is constantly used by the people. The pillars
are usually made of *saja* or *sarai* wood and are erected with
ceremonies very similar to those for a stone.

There are not many of these pillars, but they are
worth looking at. There is a very fine one near Dilmilli

THE BISON-HORN MARIA

33

- 322 on the main road from Jagdalpur to Dantewara. Near
766 Massenar at the end of a long line of menhirs is the pillar
in memory of the famous Kopa Dhurwa, which has a carving
of the old man wearing his jubilee medal. There are others
at Chinger, on the way to Chitrakot and in a few other
places.

322 Each pillar attempts to be a biography in wood of the
766 deceased. We see him important carrying the symbols of
532 wealth and power and riding on a horse or elephant; we
see the dancers that delighted him and the landa pot which
never failed to give him pleasure. We are shown the
knives and axes that he used; the animals that he saw or
hunted in the forest. The pillar for Oyami Masa, the
homicide, had several carvings illustrating his work as a
Siraha.

X

- 623 Every Maria village has a panel of secular and religious
632 officials. There is the headman (often called the Peda), his
assistant (the Kandki) and a Kotwar, who has the duty of
reporting to the police all births and deaths within his
jurisdiction. Each group of villages belongs to what is
called a Pargana, a relic of the older administrative system
of the State, and at the head of each Pargana there is a
Pargana Manjhi. Each village has its panchayat presided
over by the village headman, and each Pargana has a Pargana
panchayat which is a Court of Appeal. In 1932, the village
panchayats among all the aborigines in Bastar were
entrusted with a certain amount of criminal and civil work.
The regular Courts were deprived of jurisdiction over the
tribesmen for no fewer than seventeen Sections of the
Indian Penal Code, including those dealing with simple hurt
and assault, thefts of property up to five rupees, mischief,
trespass and adultery. The panchayats were permitted to
deal with claims for civil damages that might arise out of
the criminal offences, and in other civil claims not exceeding
twentyfive rupees. They were permitted to impose fines of
not more than twentyfive, and in marriage cases to allow
expenses up to fifty rupees. The Kotwar had the business
of reporting panchayat decisions to the police. An appeal